

and students in immersion programs attain a higher level than students in extended programs. By reorganizing programs in various ways, an improved level of language proficiency can be reached in schools.

A second finding relates positive attitudes to high achievement. Also, it appears to make no significant difference to students' achievement on tests given whether subjects are taught in French or in English. Although immersion students do lag behind in English language skills for the first few years, they generally overcome any loss once English language arts is introduced. Learning a second language may be viewed as a significant component of Canadian studies.

In reference to age, the general conclusion is that languages can be learned at any age, with learners at different ages having special characteristics. For example, the characteristics of young children lend themselves to a functional approach. Basically, age, time, and approach are interrelated factors in language learning.

LANGUAGES CAN BE LEARNED AT ANY
AGE: AN EARLY START IS NO
GUARANTEE TO SUCCESS.

An early start is no guarantee to success. Rather, in the opinion of H.H. Stern of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the starting age for learning a second language should be determined on the basis of three criteria:

- (a) the estimated time necessary to reach a given objective by a specified stage in a student's school career;
- (b) the educational value attributed to the experience of learning French at a particular stage in the school program;
and
- (c) the cost involved.²

²H.H. Stern et al, *Three Approaches to Teaching French* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1976), p.125.

As to the approach to be utilized, Dr. Stern concludes that both language study and language use are needed. The actual combination of the formal and functional approaches will depend on the age of the learner and on the time available. Each program, however, should have a strong functional component.

Finally, the Ottawa-Carleton studies indicate that program costs are a function of differences in staffing. Some of the vital factors in cost differences between programs are a result of the pupil-teacher ratio, the amount of planning and preparation time, the use of teacher-aides, and the effects of offering optional programs in some schools on the use of classroom space in other schools. To conclude, the Ottawa-Carleton studies have shown that schools can produce high levels of achievement in a second language.

SCHOOLS CAN PRODUCE HIGH LEVELS
OF ACHIEVEMENT IN A SECOND
LANGUAGE.

In Britain, the ten-year longitudinal study on elementary French has been most useful in identifying the conditions that are necessary for successful language learning in elementary schools. Among the conditions, the following are notable:

1. principals with a positive attitude toward learning a second language;
2. teachers with generalist training;
3. teachers who possess a satisfactory command of a second language and who are trained in second-language methodology;
4. articulation of instruction between elementary and secondary schools;
5. good learning materials;
6. positive parental support; and
7. opportunities to come in contact with speakers of the second language.

Moreover, the British study attributes achievement in French to be largely a function of time. Dr. C. Burstall, the principal evaluator, also concludes that the introduction of

French into the elementary school curriculum does not have adverse effects on other subjects. The principal administrative problems are the reduced flexibility and integration with other courses that result from the classroom teacher not being able to teach the language, and from the lack of articulation between primary and secondary levels. In terms of teaching approaches, no one approach is appropriate for all students. The extensive use of French in the classroom, however, results in improved achievement in the language.

NO ONE APPROACH IS APPROPRIATE
FOR ALL STUDENTS.

Another study worthy of note is the study of achievement in French in eight countries that was conducted by the International Association of Educational Achievement. The eight countries involved in this survey included Chile, England, Netherlands, New Zealand, Rumania, Scotland, Sweden and the United States. Some of the principal findings in this study are:

1. The level of achievement is largely a function of time.
2. The use of French in the classroom provides for increased proficiency.
3. Methods may vary for different aspects of second-language learning. For example, the formal approach was found to be useful in teaching reading and the functional approach useful in teaching listening and speaking.

THE LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT IS
LARGELY A FUNCTION OF TIME.

Both H.H. Stern and J.B. Carroll, the chairman of the study, suggest other factors that will determine the level of proficiency in addition to time. For Carroll, these include the student's general verbal ability, his aptitude for learning languages, motivation, methods and teachers' qualifications.

Teacher competence in seeking the second language, for example, makes a significant difference in student progress. In addition, learning a second language like French to a functional level is a long and arduous task:

For the average student in an academic type program, it may be estimated that something like six or seven years of instruction at the usual pace (e.g. three to five hours per week during the school year) is required under the conditions of instruction that typically obtain in many of the countries represented in the study.³

In his report, J.B. Carroll suggests a number of policy decisions that should be considered in curricular planning. To summarize:

1. The levels of competence to be attained by different kinds of students in different aspects of a second language are to be determined.
2. Student aspirations and needs should be considered in determining the objectives. For example, some students may be more interested in learning to read a language; others may be more interested in learning to speak and to understand a second language.
3. Provision should be made for the amount of instructional time required by different types of students to attain these objectives.
4. A decision should be made as to whether all students should have this learning experience or whether this experience is to be limited to a special group of students.
5. Provision should be made for quality instruction by attention to teacher qualifications, instructional modes, and good learning materials.

STUDENT ASPIRATIONS SHOULD BE
CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING THE
OBJECTIVES.

The three studies were reviewed at some length to clarify what schools could do in second-language learning and to suggest

³J.B. Carroll, *The Teaching of French as a Foreign Language in Eight Countries* (New York: John Wiley, 1975), p.275.

what conditions may be necessary. Some of the general conclusions that result from these studies are:

1. School programs in second languages can be organized in various ways to attain different levels of language proficiency.
2. Increasing the amount of time for learning is one way to increase learning in second languages.
3. Use of the second language in the classroom is an important way to improve learning.
4. Languages can be learned at any age with learners at different ages having specific characteristics.
5. Success in the beginning stages of language learning creates good attitudes.
6. The attitudes of teachers and principals have a tremendous effect on learning.
7. Combinations of formal and functional approaches are needed in second languages.
8. Articulation and integration of instruction are necessary conditions to success in language learning.

It may be concluded, I believe, that schools can make a valuable contribution to language learning if appropriate conditions are provided.

SUCCESS IN THE BEGINNING STAGES CREATES GOOD ATTITUDES.

In the Alberta context, the research findings have several implications for second languages. First, it seems appropriate to determine a level of language proficiency in a basic education program that is meaningful to a student's future role as an adult citizen. Secondly, once this level of proficiency is specified, provision should be made for the instructional time that is estimated to be necessary to attain this level. Thirdly, alternative ways to reach a level or levels of proficiency might be outlined in a school program. The starting age would depend on the organization of the total time allotment estimated as necessary to attain a particular level of proficiency.

In a plan suggested by Dr. D.V. Parker, in a working paper prepared for the Department of Education, five levels of language

proficiency are proposed which may be attained through the implementation of five different programs. An overview of these programs in *French as a Second Language - A Choice of Program Options* (A Working Paper) might be summarized as follows:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Level of Language Proficiency</u>	<u>Implementation</u>
<u>Introductory</u> 375 hours	<u>Minimum</u> - Meets very elementary everyday needs.	A three-course sequence at the senior high school level.
<u>Basic</u> 750 hours	<u>Basic</u> - Enables student to function in the majority of everyday social situations.	A six-course sequence beginning in Grade Seven.
<u>Regular</u> 1020 hours	<u>Functional</u> - Enables the student to communicate with ease in most everyday social and non-demanding work situations.	A nine-course sequence beginning in Grade Four.
<u>Extended</u> 1395 hours	<u>Applied</u> - Enables the student to follow instruction in another subject given in French and to use French as a tool for further learning.	One or more subjects taught in the French language along with one course in the use of the language, both at the senior high school level.
<u>Immersion</u> 7470 hours	<u>Native-Like</u> - enables the student to function in all situations common to a native speaker of the age, experience and educational level of the learner.	A program beginning in early Elementary or Secondary School in which French is used for 70% or more of the total instructional time in the first few years. ⁴

⁴Douglas V. Parker, *French as a Second Language - A Choice of Program Options* (a working paper) (Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1977), p.13.

The above plan permits school jurisdictions to select a program option or options on the basis of community resources and aspirations. Pather than offering a language on a piece-meal basis, a jurisdiction may concentrate its resources on one or more options that aim at a particular level of proficiency.

Currently, it would appear that the majority of jurisdictions in Alberta are implementing some form of "Introductory" program which aims at a "Minimum" level of proficiency. Although programs that are longer than three years are often offered, very little articulation is evident between elementary and junior high school levels and between junior high and senior high school levels. As a result, students may take a language for six or nine years but end up with only a minimum knowledge because of the lack of continuity.

SCHOOLS CAN IMPROVE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING SIGNIFICANTLY.

In the last few years, some school jurisdictions in Alberta have undertaken projects to improve articulation of programs as a first step to implementing a six-year "Basic" or a nine-year "Regular" program.

The "Basic Level" outlined by Dr. D.V. Parker might be a reasonable goal for Alberta schools for the immediate future in the light of actual teacher supply. This level is proposed as the learning outcome in 750 instructional hours of a six-course sequence beginning in Grade VII. The "Functional Level" might be a goal for some jurisdictions in Alberta who have a sufficient teacher supply. The "Applied" and "Native-Like" levels might be perceived as desirable and necessary by possibly ten percent of the population in Alberta and would be offered as alternative programs in some schools where a sufficient demand is expressed.

In essence, we can have curricula in schools that lead to different levels of proficiency. Schools can improve second-language learning significantly by attention to serviceable objectives, instructional time, teaching approach, staffing, and learning materials.

Appendix A

Basic level

The student:

- 1) has a good fundamental knowledge of the language: its grammar, pronunciation, and idiom; has an active vocabulary of 3000-3500 words, and about 100 basic sentence patterns;
- 2) can make himself understood in conversation;
- 3) can read, with the aid of a dictionary, standard texts written without stylistic difficulties on subjects within his interest;
- 4) has some knowledge of French-speaking communities;
- 5) is capable of re-commencing the study of French at a higher level when motivated to do so in later life.

Middle Level

The student:

- 1) can read books of personal interest and newspapers with occasional help from the dictionary;
- 2) understands radio and television news and programs in which he is personally interested;
- 3) can participate adequately in conversations;
- 4) has absorbed information about the culture, society, customs, economy, government, and institutions of the French-speaking community he is interested in;
- 5) could function quite well in a French community after a few months' residence.

Top level

The student:

- 1) can take further education in French in a bilingual educational institution; that is, understand lectures, write papers, take part in class discussions;

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 896

FI 009 496

AUTHOR Lazaruk, Walter A.
 TITLE What Schools Can Do in Second Languages.
 INSTITUTION Alberta Teachers Association, Edmonton. Modern Language Council.
 PUB DATE 78
 NOTE 14p.; Some parts of document may not reproduce clearly
 JOURNAL CIT Alberta Modern Language Journal; v16 n3 pt-18 Spr 1978

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Bilingualism; Communicative Competence (Languages); Curriculum Planning; Educational Objectives; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; French; Immersion Programs; Instructional Improvement; Language Attitudes; *Language Instruction; *Language Learning Levels; Language of Instruction; Language Proficiency; *Language Programs; Language Skills; *Modern Language Curriculum; Official Languages; *Program Planning; *Second Language Learning; Student Attitudes; Teaching Methods
 IDENTIFIERS Alberta; Canada

ABSTRACT

Current educational research and possible directions for the improvement of second language education in schools are discussed in the light of current Canadian political and economic influences. The Ontario Ministry of Education has proposed three levels of proficiency in French as reasonable objectives to be achieved by secondary schools in their different programs. The basic level which would include basic conversational skills and some knowledge of French-speaking people and culture could be attained in 1,380 instructional hours through an improved regular program. The middle level, aimed at providing students with a good working knowledge of French, could be attained after 2,400 instructional hours in an "extended program," that is, a combination of instruction in French and one subject taught in French. A third level, which would enable the student to function easily in most communication situations, could be attained after 5,310 instructional hours in an immersion program. Based on the assumption that the same level of bilingualism is neither possible nor necessary for all students, the three levels and corresponding programs are suggested to school districts as possible alternatives. The programs are discussed with reference to cost, need, educational value, time available, methodology, student needs and attitudes. (AMH)

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ED155896

What Schools Can Do in Second Languages

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The opinions expressed in this article are the writer's own thoughts and research, and are not necessarily the views of Alberta Education.

For communities in Alberta that are interested in improving second-language learning, this article will attempt to review current educational research and suggest some possible directions for improving second-language education in schools. In the light of current political and economic influences, it seems appropriate to specify more clearly what schools can do in second languages.

At the outset, it is important to mention that thinking about languages in Canada has been guided recently by a report on French by the Ontario Ministry of Education entitled the *Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Teaching of French* or the Gillin Report. In an attempt to narrow the gap between public expectations and what the schools can do, this report proposes three levels of proficiency in French. These are considered to be reasonable objectives for the end of secondary schools of three different programs.

The first level outlined is the "basic level" which would enable a student to make himself understood in conversation and to possess some knowledge about French-speaking people and culture. It is estimated that this level could be attained in 1380 instructional hours through an improved regular program in which French is taught as a subject. This level could be viewed as being part of basic literacy in Canada.

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The next level, called the "middle level," aims at providing students with a working knowledge of French. In other words, this level would enable students to read newspapers, to listen to the radio, and to speak with French-speaking Canadians. It is estimated that this competence can be attained after 2400 instructional hours in an "extended program," which includes a combination of French and a subject taught in French. This level would meet the communicative needs of common social situations.

THE GILLIN REPORT PROPOSES THREE LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY IN FRENCH.

A third and "top level" would incorporate the first two and foster a level of proficiency comparable to that of a native speaker. This level would enable the student to function in most communication situations and could be attained after 5310 instructional hours in a "bilingual" or immersion program in which French is taught as a subject, and in which French is employed as a medium of instruction to teach other subjects. To reach the "middle" and "top" levels, it is expected that students would participate in exchanges, in summer camps, and in travel experiences where they could interact with French-speaking peers.

THE SAME LEVEL OF BILINGUALISM IS NOT DESIRED BY AND NOT NECESSARY FOR ALL STUDENTS.

With the underlying assumption that the same level of bilingualism is not desired by and not necessary for all students, the three levels and corresponding programs are suggested as possible alternatives that school districts might implement on the basis of community aspirations and resources. These levels are outlined in more detail in Appendix A.

In the Ottawa-Carleton area, considerable experimentation has been undertaken with different program alternatives in an

attempt to improve French language instruction. To improve learning outcomes, the programs explored variations in time, starting age, and teaching approach. For example, programs in which French was taught for 30, 40, 60 and 90 minutes per day were implemented as well as programs in which French was used as a language of instruction from 50% to 100% of the school day. The starting ages ranged from Kindergarten to Grades VIII and IX. The teaching approaches attempted included the formal, in which French is taught as a subject; functional, in which French is used as a medium of instruction; or a combination of formal and functional approaches.¹

THE MORE INSTRUCTIONAL TIME AVAILABLE,
THE MORE LEARNING IS LIKELY TO OCCUR.

The findings of the Ottawa-Carleton experiments help answer more completely the question of what the schools can do in second-language learning. Generally, the principal finding is that the more instructional time that is available, the more learning is likely to occur. The effective use of time, the organization of the program, and adequate curriculum planning and preparation were also factors of importance.

LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE: A SIGNIFICANT COMPONENT OF CANADIAN STUDIES.

Essentially, students in extended programs reach a higher level of language proficiency than do regular program students,

¹In a definition proposed by H.H. Stern, a formal approach is any method such as grammar - translation, direct, audiolingual or cognitive - which teaches the language by focussing the learner's attention on the language as a code to be learned by study, analysis or practice. A functional approach is an approach which attempts to teach a language by involving the learner in situations of real use. The learner is engaged in real communication, for example, by learning a subject through the medium of the second language.

- 2) can accept training or employment in the other language, or live in the other language community, after a short period of induction training;
- 3) can participate easily in conversations;
- 4) understands and shares the emotional attitudes and the values held in common by members of the other community, since he possesses a core of ideas, items of knowledge, and concepts available to the native speaker.

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OFF TO AN EARLY START

The Soviet Union believes in teaching foreign languages to students at an early age. In Moscow, for example, there are at least 80 special schools which provide 10 years of intensive foreign language instruction in addition to their regular curriculum. In special school No. 60, for example, located in the Kallnin Prospekt area of Moscow, one of its most modern, the school is known as the "Angliski Shkola" (the English School), where foreign language instruction begins at age seven and continues through age 17. Most of the faculty is bilingual, most of the signs are in Russian, and English is taught in a British accent.

Reproduced from THE LASSO, Wyoming Humanities Newsletter, May 1976.
